Wilhelm Stapel

Six Chapters on Christianity and National Socialism

Third Reich Originals

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Translated from the Third Reich Originals

Sechs Kapitel Uber Christentum Und Nationalsozialismus

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Sechs Kapitel über Christentum und Nationalsozialismus

1. Das Wesen der nationalsozialistischen Bewegung
2. Die Stellung des Nationalsozialismus zum Christentum
3. Ist die Rassenfrage ein Hindernis des Christentums?
4. Ist der Nationalismus ein Hindernis des Christentums?
5. Ist der Sozialismus ein Hindernis des Christentums?
6. Die Würde der Nation und die Würde der Kirche

Siebente Auflage

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Introduction

Wilhelm Stapel, the German Protestant writer and a well-known supporter of National Socialism. As the editor of the fiercely anti-Semitic publication "Deutsches Volkstum," he played a significant role and had strong ties with several institutions and key figures of the Third Reich. Stapel firmly resisted the Confessing Church, led by Martin Niemöller and Karl Barth, which was opposed to National Socialism. Instead, he endorsed the policies of Reich Bishop Ludwig Müller and held an advisory role to Hanns Kerrl, the Reich Minister of Church Affairs. Post World War II, Stapel was a critic of the emerging German Federal Republic and even urged a boycott of the 1949 Bundestag elections. Despite his active participation in the National Socialist regime, his passing in 1954 was largely overlooked by the public. The booklet, which was released in 1931, delves into the National Socialist movements viewpoint on Germany's Christian heritage and the personal beliefs and spirituality of Christians.

The intended aim of this publication is to correct the prevalent misconceptions propagated in post-war literature on Positive Christianity.

Preface

On January 30, 1931, I spoke at an apologetic course at the Spandau Johannesstift on "The Worldview of National Socialism and Christianity." The lecture provoked a lively debate. Since I was repeatedly asked about the lecture, I decided to write it down later, cleansed of the coincidences of the occasion. More extensively than in Spandau I have treated here the doctrine of Nomos, which one will find treated on a larger scale in my forthcoming publication "The Christian Statesman".

It may seem strange that I often use the Greek words of the New Testament instead of the well-known German words. The reason for this is: the Lutheran translation has become so familiar to us that we carelessly read over its words. I would like to force the reader to pay attention to the strangeness of some words which are sealing words of metaphysical mysteries. So that nothing is lost to the non-humanistically educated reader, I have always put the German words next to it. It is not unimportant, nevertheless, that the almost worn out word for fulfillment, Blerofis, means the opposite of emptying, Kenosis. Likewise, that the word Hnpomoné, which we translate as "patience," actually means "staying under." It is not, therefore, a matter of learned ornamentation, but of pushing toward the full

spiritual realization of the original meaning. What grotesque misunderstandings arise from the superficial acceptance of biblical words we have abundantly experienced in the misuse of the words "Thou shalt not kill," "Peace on earth," "Love your enemies," and so on. Our language has also been secularized; we must first regain a sense that the words of God are not moral exhortations clothed in abstruse notions of a bygone age, but that they are sanctifying and sanctified words of eternity that will endure whether heaven and earth pass away.

The Essence of the National Socialist Movement

In National Socialism, three layers can be distinguished. First, the small layer of leaders who have a more or less definite political will; second, what is called the "national socialist movement," a large crowd of people held together by a more or less clarified world outlook; and third, the fickle crowd of those who merely want to "cast their vote" against the tribulations of the times. This last layer gives National Socialism its actual plebiscitary character. What matters to us here is the middle layer which carries the "movement" and the views of the leaders insofar as they determine this movement spiritually.

Of course, one will not understand National Socialism if one wants to understand it only from its "Weltanschauung". For the world view is only secondary to it. The primary thing in this movement is instinct. Allow me to quote myself from the year 1924. At that time, when the Dawes Plan had caused a strong nationalist wave to flare up, I wrote (in the May issue of "Deutsches Volkstums"): "The most significant thing about the Völkisch movement is first of all that it is elementary. It is not artificially ignited by the will of individual men, but the will of the people comes to meet the

callers. It springs up naturally in all parts of Germany, in all strata of the population; in all parties and denominations. Because the movement is elementary, it has such tremendous force. At present it is the only force capable of breaking down the hardened barriers of the parties. It is a still unguided movement, breaking out of popular instinct with tremendous tenacity and seeking its way partly within the parties, partly outside them."

You will appreciate what the elementary nature of the movement means if you compare the National Socialist movement of the pre-war period with the National Socialist movement of our time. There, the futile effort of individual leaders, especially Friedrich Naumann, to win the allegiance of a mass. Here, an influx of the masses that threatens to flood over the leadership. This is precisely why the intellectual, even the educated citizen, who took pleasure in intellectual efforts such as those of Friedrich Naumann, looks with unease at the unbridled and chaotic gears of National Socialism. How can one concern oneself with something so primitive! A similar attitude was once taken by the educated middle classes against the ostracized Social Democracy. But perhaps this distinguished attitude towards the elementary is only weakness of life. Because one does not dare to lead, one considers oneself "better" and turns away. But August Winnig has shown us in his book "From the Proletariat to the Working Class" how much it

backfires when the intelligentsia does not fulfill the task of spiritual leadership.
Because National Socialism is an elementary movement, it cannot be approached with arguments. Arguments would only work if the movement had become big through arguments. But on September 14, 1930, it turned out that National Socialist voices came to light in quantity even in the remotest villages, in villages where no agitator and no leaflets had ever penetrated at all! So there must be something else at work here than argumentative agitation. The astonishing fact should also be pointed out that many people vote National Socialist against their better judgment, as it were. I recently overheard the conversation of two very respectable merchants on a suburban train in Hamburg. Both of them criticized the program as well as the public appearance of the National Socialists, until one of them brought the turning point into the conversation: "But let us imagine how it would be if we had no National Socialist party". Whereupon the other confessed: "That's why I voted National Socialist". The other would then respond: "And so did I." After a while of further rumination on the repugnance of the National Socialist movement, both came to the conclusion that, in view of the political situation, they had no choice but to vote National Socialist again anyway. - From the letter of a student who writes very critically about National Socialism, I would like to read the following sentence: "In contrast, National Socialism is an

instinctive outburst of the German people. Its specific unspirituality, indeed its human simplicity, belongs to it by its very nature. And this 'simplicity' will know how to assert itself: That alone shall decide the outcome." This formulation seems to me downright classic. So the church is not confronted with a "spiritual" movement, but with an elementary one, a movement that comes from instinct, that does not get involved in discussions at all, but wants to crush the opponent, a movement that does not use the spoken word to discuss, but rather to call, to demand, to incite and to command. What would be the role of a church that comes up with "arguments" to "prove" to the stormers (the driving men) of such a movement in a "discussion" that this or that is not right? The style of the discussion as the style of the liberal epoch is not only inappropriate here, but comical. Here for the church, there is only left the style of proclamation (kerygma).

These days one hears that the church must "accommodate" itself to the movement, because otherwise it would "lose ground among the people even more than before." There are people whose highest wisdom is to step on the so-called "ground of reality" that others have prepared before them. For my part, I seldom tread without suspicion on the ground that others have prepared, and prefer to create a ground myself, on which then, yes, the other ground-treaders can tread. But there are two things to be said about the above

advice to the church in particular. First, the church should not look at any ground among the people, but at the ground of the gospel. It is not to tread on the ground of this world, but the others are to tread on the ground of the gospel. Secondly, it remains eternally true that the good shepherd must go after the lost sheep. Seeking and helping human souls is part of the essence of faith. But something different from seeking human souls is the assimilation of "the church" or "Christianity" to a "movement." Such an "assimilation-Christianity" forgets the dignity of the Ministerii thei, the Diakoné (the ministry) of the Gospel. To seek is noble, to follow is unworthy. Comforting and helping is divine, discussing is very human. Paul's words against the moras kai apaideutas zeteseis (the silly and undisciplined discussions) (2Ti 2:23), against the vain logomachein (arguing with words) (14) cannot be inculcated strongly enough in our time. For in this field morologia and gutrapelia (gossip and joking) always win (Eph 5:4). You also do not hit the real forces of the movement with it.

If you want to get a feeling for the real forces that are in National Socialism, you have to go to those meetings where those who have committed themselves to the movement sit on top. There you will see honored in bloody bandages before the whole assembly those who have not spared life and limb for the cause. And you must go to the houses of the

National Socialists, who take in the families to whom the Communists have beaten up everything. Here is not community of word, but of deed. Compared to this devotion, the accompanying intellectual ideas, what is called "Weltanschauung", are less important. Here is a naive, hot and wild resistence of the people against what is the status-quo.

It is now a matter for you to preach the gospel to this movement. A preacher has lost to the National Socialist movement from the outset if he wants to make his Christianity "contemporary", if he wants to adapt what he believes to the desires and imagination of others and in this way make it catchy. That the religion becomes "contemporary" is only a demand of historically educated people. But let us not forget that the crowd of the people does not "stand on the historical point of view" at all, but that they live themselves quite naively, that they are interested in history only as far as they feel confirmed by it. The "historical Jesus" is no more to them than Socrates or Buddha. For them, Fridericus or Bismarck are more important historical symbols, and rightly so. Jesus as a moralist and idealist, who lived in Palestine in the beginning of the Roman Empire and preached Aramaic, who went to his death for his ideas - how many people suffer death for their ideas and ideals! - that is, after all,

nothing special. Other figures would be closer to us for today's needs.

A position which sees Jesus only as a teacher and a man, which "makes understandable" the death of the Son of God on the cross as a myth from other oriental myths, in order to "peel out" the "ethics of the Sermon on the Mount" as the "essence of Christianity" or as the "core", may find applause among the liberal and enlightened fellow travelers of the National Socialist movement, but it is nothing compared to the ardent interior of the movement. Christianization of this movement is possible only from the dogmatic position. He who does not know what sin and redemption is, he who does not see Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God from eternity to eternity, he who sees in the crucifixion only a regrettable and actually superfluous execution and does not know and believe that here the substance of creation was cleansed from sin and death, he who is only concerned with social goodness, with good citizenship and not with eternal life, it is such a man who should not start talking about Christ in front of National Socialists. He may be an excellent man, worthy of all respect, he may also become a good National Socialist, but he is not a kletos tou theou, a called of God!

The Stance of National Socialism Towards Christianity

But is National Socialism at all receptive to Christianity? Is it not "pagan"? Would it not prefer to return to the cult of Wodan, if it could do so without historical and philosophical shame? Let's first examine how National Socialism, of its own accord, relates to Christianity.

That Hitler takes his Catholic Christianity seriously is known from his book "Mein Kampf" and from many other statements. It is no less known that the Catholic Church is distrustful, perhaps not so much of him as of the movement associated with his name, and that it even tries to prove heresy. Let us leave aside the personal confessions of the leaders and stick to the program. We know well that the "program" is not essential to the movement; the movement is much more than the rather random "25 points" indicate. Just as in the peasant uprising of the late Middle Ages the "twelve articles" of the peasantry, gathered together from current demands, were not the decisive thing in the movement. But one can at least recognize the direction of the movement from the program.

Point 24 states: "We demand freedom of all religious confessions in the state, as far as they do not endanger its existence or offend against the moral feeling of the Germanic race. The party as such represents the standpoint of a positive Christianity, without binding itself denominationally to a certain confession. It fights the Jewish-materialistic spirit in and outside of us and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our people can only take place from within on the basis: common good before self-interest". Gottfried Feder, in his widely circulated and authoritative little commentary, "Das Programm der N.S.D.A.P. und seine weltanschaulichen Grundgedanken" (201. - 250. Thous. 1931), opposes the "many foolish and clumsy attacks on Christianity" (page 61) and repeats: "The party as such stands on the ground of positive Christianity." He adds (page 62), "All questions, hopes and desires as to whether the German people will one day find a new form for their knowledge and experience of God, do not belong here," these being matters beyond the scope of a party program. In the first part of the paper (page 17) we read, "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that nothing is further from the N.S.D.A.P.'s mind than to attack the Christian religion and its worthy ministers."

This says two things: first, that National Socialism as a party does not embrace the aspirations of an exclusive "German religion" of any kind; second, that it feels itself to belong to

"positive Christianity." The word "positive" here is obviously meant to signify the two expressions of Christianity in the Protestant and Catholic churches (i.e., rejection of an unchurched reason-based Christianity) and is probably also meant to reject the historicization and psychologization of Christianity as well as any philosophical surrogate.

We note that "the freedom of all religious confessions" - not only "of all Christian confessions" - "in the state" is a liberal demand. Thus, a Christianity of the state as such is rejected; the state will tolerate any religious confession. But this liberal kind of tolerance experiences two limitations. First, the "Germanic sense of morality" is not to be violated. This goes above all to pacifism. No tolerance is granted to Christian pacifism. Secondly, the "Jewish materialistic spirit" is to be fought. This goes to Marxism. Undoubtedly, with these words, tolerance is also denounced to any Christian socialism that incorporates the teachings of Karl Marx. So the tolerance is granted only to a non-pacifist and non-Marxist religion. Feder's sentence against "people who receive their political orders from abroad," a sentence directed against ultramontanism, has been deleted in recent issues, probably as a result of attacks from the Catholic side. We are thus dealing with a limited state liberalism.

That there is a strong desire within the party for a "German people's church" is evident from some writings. (For example: Alfred Rosenberg, The Myth of the 20th Century. Page 575: "The longing to give the Nordic racial soul its form as a German church under the sign of the folk myth, that is among the greatest tasks of our century.") But whoever would presuppose such desires as common property of the movement would be mistaken. Officially and programmatically, National Socialism did not lean toward such aspirations. A receptivity for Christian mission may therefore be assumed with reason in the National Socialist movement, as far as it is not a pacifist and Marxist-turned-Christianity.

Is The Racial Question an Obstacle to Christianity

Christianity encounters three great complex feelings and ideas in National Socialism, with which it is unavoidable to come to terms on. The race question, nationalism, and socialism are the three circles of sentiment and thought with which one must take a stand when coming into contact with this movement. So we ask: What is Christianity's position on the race question, on nationalism and on the socialism of the National Socialist movement?

As far as the question of race is concerned, one must not think that a certain scientific concept of race is binding in the movement. The Güntherian concept of race is indeed very widespread, and a preference for the Nordic race is often found among the more educated members of the party, but basically in the National Socialist movement the whole question of race boils down to the opposition between Germans and Jews. The doctrine of the special value of the Nordic race is not party official, but hobby; but anti-Semitism is party official. This anti-Semitism often leads to a rejection of the Old Testament, and there is further the danger that by some National Socialists Jesus "as a Jew" is

"rejected" from the outset. So we ask: Should one abandon the Old Testament, should one at least treat it as an adiaphoron (unimportant for the decision)? Further, what is the Judaism of Jesus all about? Allow me to present to you an attempt at a solution to these two questions.

We find in the New Testament itself the confrontation of Judaism against Christianity as a religious community of people, which has its special "nomos" (By nomos ("law"), I understand here the God-ordained natural constitution of a community, the sanctified customs, ideals and values of a people. Compare the very informative book by Hans Bogner, Die verwirklichte Demokratie. Hamburg 1930). When the apostle Paul started his ministry to the Gentiles, he had to deal with the "styloi" (pillars) in Jerusalem and with their emissaries who made life difficult for him all the way to Rome. Paul allows the nomos of the Jews to apply to the Jews themselves, but only as a preliminary to faith. He assigns it a certain role in the development of salvation history.

For the other peoples, however, according to his teaching, this nomos does not have such a significance; they do not need to enter the kingdom of heaven via this stage. As vehemently as Paul opposes the extension of the Nomos to the non-Jewish peoples, it does not occur to him to dispute Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17. Jesus did not want to dissolve

the Jewish law, but to fulfill it, ou katalysai, alla plerosai. So there must be something in the Jewish law that makes that law, though not a necessary stage for Christian faith, yet finds a "fulfillment" through Christ. This something Paul calls in various places the "dikaioma" (the justifying). It is this dikaioma within the nomos that matters to him.

Now allow me a position, which I believe is definitely in agreement with Paul's teachings and for which I contend, he would be in agreement with if he lived today. Just as the Jews have their Nomos, so every real people has its Nomos. This nomos does not need to be recorded, but it lives in the conscience and in the organic tradition of every people. It presents itself in customs, law, and morality. It is always traced back in some way to the people's gods, and it is protected by the people's gods. This nomos creates the hierarchy of values in a folk community. There is also a German nomos, as there was, according to the myth of Numa Pompilius of the nymph Egeria, a nomos of the Roman people, as there was an Athenian nomos, sanctified by the goddess Athena.

If now Paul allows that one reaches from the people's religion straight to Christianity without having to step over the threshold of the temple of Jerusalem, then also in the nomois of the other peoples such dikaiomata must be, in whose "fulfillment" the contact with Jesus Christ is made

possible. Thus, we place alongside the nomos of the Jews, on an equal footing, the nomoi of all other peoples called to Christianity.

Nevertheless, the Jewish nomos, and with it the Old Testament, retains a special dignity. And this in two respects. First. Jesus himself lived according to the Jewish law. Even if he wandered beyond the boundaries of the Jewish people, he never gave the scandal of apostasy. He addressed himself first and foremost to the Jews among whom he was born, and in so doing he set an example for all of us to follow. Secondly, in addition to the Law, the Old Testament also contains the Prophets. We do not have the prophecies of the Savior's birth among other peoples - perhaps with one exception, I mean those strange and uninterpreted verses in Virgil's Sclogues. This double connection with the appearance of Christ gives the Old Testament a special position, but it does not give the Jewish people a special position in the sense of Jewish Christianity. In relation to Jesus, the Old Testament has its special dignity; in relation to us and our Christianity, the nomoi of all called peoples stand next to the nomos of the Old Testament. What seemed noble and good to other peoples, what was considered worthy of the sacrifice of life among them, flowed no less from God's mercy than the law from Mount Sinai.

But is not Jesus a born Jew, and is not the Gospel thus essentially a Jewish message to the world? Just as Plato's dialogues are a Hellenic message and Faust a German message to the world? If you, gentlemen, consider Jesus to be the son of a Jewish father, the bodily son of the carpenter Joseph of Nazareth, then you will not be able to avoid this consequence. And then comes the reverence which, in spite of all the racial doctrine, does not want to let go of Jesus, and looks for historical and ethnographic excuses of the kind that in Galilee as a transit area of the peoples there had been a lot of Aryan blood, that Jesus' appearance and teachings show very un-Jewish features, etc. Such hypotheses have something embarrassing about them. They construct wishful possibilities up to connections and processes about which one can and should know absolutely nothing of.

But we Christians have been taught by the gospels and apostles that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the premise of the New Testament that Jesus has no earthly father, but only an earthly mother. (I am aware of the attempts to gain an "original" version of Matthew 1:16 from certain readings, they have nothing scientifically convincing for me. It is a wishful hypothesis of reason, the impression of which is aggravated by a certain - suspicious - accompanying sensation). But if Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, is the Son of God, he is not the son of a Jew or of an Aryan, but precisely

of the Creator Himself, who is before all race and before all people. I do not even want to resort to biology and refer to the fact that parthenogenesis is, after all, in the structural possibility of the organic, that in any case it does not impose on us a fantasy error, but I want to leave the mystery to itself: it is a miracle. Christianity is not a matter of causal law. What can we care about plausibilities in the constructed fabric of causal relations? We are not dealing with a philosophical prima causa (first cause) and a primum movens (first impulse of movement), but with the living God who does miracles and with the Son of God who did miracles and rose from the dead. I reject every imposition to make the miracles plausible to me and to call not plausible events fictitious. If Jesus is the son of the living God, he is not the son of a Jewish father and Jewish kind, but he is born to all nations. Here is a miracle that never was before and never will be again, and on this miracle hangs our eternal blessedness. If we believe this - and this belief means being a Christian - then every discussion about the racial affiliation of Jesus is senseless, even blasphemous.

Thus the question of race has been removed from the realm of Christianity. Racial issues and Christianity do not touch each other.

Is Nationalism a Hindrance to Christianity?

Nationalism, too, does not seem to me to be an obstacle to Christianity. Admittedly, it is historically a component of secularization: when the state was no longer seen as a divine institution and rule was no longer taken by God's grace, the state was derived from "the people" and thus arrived at the concept of the nation-state. In this respect, it is understandable to speak of an "idolatry" of the state. But nationalism need not be idolatry of the state. German idealism in particular has repelled any idolatry in the orientation of the national idea: Fichte sought to understand the nations as a lawfulness created by God. If one now attributes to nationalism the "dangers" of profanation and demonization, it must be said that these dangers threaten every human community. Marriage as a civil marriage is also profaned. And marriage out of passion, which knows nothing but itself, is possessed by demons. The nation can certainly coexist with religion. History proves that there have been personalities whose Christianity is as unquestionable as their national sentiments. It is more serious to establish a distinction between national morality and Christian morality. Christian morality, it is said, knows only "brothers." Nationalism, however, knows an "inner"

and an "outer" morality. Christian morality knows no enemies, but national morality distinguishes friends and enemies.

In contrast, I put forward the thesis that there is and can be no morality detached from the community. Every morality distinguishes between enemy and friend. Family, people, church, and indeed the community as such as well as every community in a certain age, each have their moral nomos. The "thou shalt" is categorical, but the "what" is quite hypothetical. And this hypothesis gets its content by the respective state of life within the community. One cannot replace the living conscience by a fixed system of moral precepts, one cannot transform ethics into logic. If this were possible, there could only be moral errors, but not a moral change of view, but this exists in spite of all systematizers.

But now, has not Christian morality come over every ethos which is only popular morality? Does not the Sermon on the Mount in principle abolish every special morality, does it not establish the metaphysical order of values par excellence, and is not every Christian now obliged to abandon all national peculiarities of a moral nature, with them also all distinctions of friend and foe, and henceforth to see in all men nothing but "brothers"?

We maintain that the Sermon on the Mount also knows a distinction between friend and foe and that its morality by no means embraces all the people of this Zion. The basic law of the Sermon on the Mount is love as "agape". Agape is the nomos of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Sermon on the Mount is the transfer of the heavenly nomos to the earthly community of Jesus' disciples. Just as Jesus, born in Bethlehem, is God incarnate, so the Sermon on the Mount is an incarnation of the heavenly nomos on earth: agape becomes the human order in Jesus' circle of followers. So this nomos now applies only to the circle of disciples, just as the incarnation of God applies only to Jesus. Just as God as man has to bear the weaknesses of mankind, such as hunger and thirst, heat and frost, toil and death and so on, so also the earthly community of the heavenly Nomos has to bear the earthly passions. Hence the peculiar moral limbo of discipleship that allows for a Judas Iscariot and that also allows for Peter's tears on the night Jesus was betrayed. Now, if someone wants to live according to the nomos of the Kingdom of Heaven transformed into earthly concepts and ideas, as it is in the Sermon on the Mount, he must also be a disciple of Jesus: he must have the faith that is able to do miracles, he must sell all his property and give it to the poor, he must not expect the rest of the world to act like him. It is not enough to pick out one or another "verse" from the Sermon on the Mount and, for example, by falsely

transforming "Love your real enemies" into "Love your polemious" (that is, "Love your personal enemies, love the hated ones" into "Love your enemies of the state and the country". Enemies of the state are not to be "hated"; they are their "enemies" in a purely factual sense, because they want and need to be different from us. In the war of 1866, for example, Prussians and Hanoverians did not "hate" each other, they simply fought out the German leadership problem. Humanly, fighting soldiers can find each other not only worthy of respect, but even lovable. A chivalrous war will not annul personal friendships.) to declare the natural morality of nations as settled. It must also be remembered that the nomos of the Kingdom of Heaven has limits. It applies only to the community of God's children, not to hell. If God "loved" hell, hell would not be hell, so God and the devil would be one. The Kingdom of Heaven and Hell oppose each other like fellowship and apostasy; God and the Devil oppose each other like lord and indignant, the nomos of Heaven and that of Hell oppose each other like agape and hubris. Therefore the struggle is set between both "kingdoms". And because the fallen world has part in both kingdoms, it is a battlefield. Whoever would declare the Sermon on the Mount as the only binding morality of this world, which is destined to be a world of struggle, would give up the self-assertion of life and thus the existence of creation, because he would give up the struggle. He would make the anti-divine attempt to redeem

the fallen world through morality, that is, through the nomos, but this Paul rejected with all his strength and clarity. He would transform redemption through the cross into self-salvation through morality. Ethicized Christianity, which replaces the cross on Golgotha with the Sermon on the Mount, is the hidden Pelagianism of our time.

Thus, the proclamation of the heavenly nomos is not at all opposed to national morality. But as God makes us co-heirs of the kingdom of God through faith, He also kindles our hearts to agape. But as human beings we can have faith and love only in the manifestation of "hope." We are dependent on "patience." Again and again, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to hymomone: to wait patiently. It seems to me that this admonition is not only about the return of Christ, but about the natural order of the world. After all, Paul himself also sought his "earthly" right and made use of the legal remedies of his Roman state, of which he was a citizen.

But as Christians, are we not enjoined to peaceableness? Are we not to be kirenopoioi (peace makers)? Making peace is not the same as making peace treaties. For peace treaties are not means of peace but means of struggle. Or is the peace of Versailles something other than a means of struggle and coercion to keep Germany in disarray and to wear down its existence? Did not the apostle warn against those who say siren and aspaleia, pair and fûreté, peace

and safety? "Perdition shall overtake them." (1 Thess. 5,3) One must take the word peace exactly as one must take the word enemy exactly; because hypocrites go about in the world all the time to catch our hearts with the ropes of the word. Allow me to leave you with three considerations on the question of Christian pacifism.

First. Just as John the Baptist did not answer the men of war to their question, "What shall we do?" by saying, "Refuse military service!" (he forbade them only the diafeiein = to extort money and the sykophantein = to harass.

Luk 3,14), Jesus did not "condemn" military service. He walks unabashedly with a Roman officer and commends his faith without asking him to resign from the service. After all, it is remarkable that Peter has a sword with him on the night of the betrayal and strikes with the sword despite Jesus' admonition - he remains Peter after all. The Lord must be captured and crucified, otherwise the world would not be redeemed. But Peter's bloody day is answered only with a quiet admonition, not with a condemnation. The most important thing, however, is that Jesus, who never condemned war service as such, condemns wealth as such. Nowhere is it written that military service makes souls unskilled for heaven, but we are always reminded that wealth hardens hearts. Those who wish to become Jesus' disciples must first lay aside their earthly wealth. This

distinction between the effeminating, ego-addictive wealth and the hardening war service that educates to the use of life should make us think.

Second. None of the apostles and none of the reformers, none of all those who nevertheless preached peaceableness, condemned war as such. Zwingli even stood in battle, Luther rushed to the Peasants' War and later to the Turkish War - today one would say in newspaper language: "rushed". Nevertheless, pacifism existed in antiquity just as it does today. In fact, pacifism appears both in Athens and in Rome in a very specific time: in the age of bourgeois enlightenment, the dissolution of the state-forming forces. In the Middle Ages, too, rationalism (influenced by Arab philosophy) is the bearer of pacifist ideas. We can trace step by step in the last century that pacifist ideals grew not out of Christianity but out of the Enlightenment and spread with the humanitarian ideal of liberalism. Pacifism is nothing else than the ideal of secularity of the enlightened citizen, who does not want to be disturbed in his life activity and in his enjoyment of life. He secures his biologically based needs by elevating them to a "morality," and he secures this morality in turn by embellishing it apologetically with Bible verses in order to gain the authority of the Gospel for his undisturbed

bourgeois existence, which is now supposed to coincide with "Christian morality." There is here a subreptio (logical surreptitiousness), on which one must let fall the light of the historical knowledge, so that everybody can follow the surreptitious way of the serpent in the garden of Eden. In the Enlightenment, the serpent crawled out of the arbor of the forbidden tree, in the end it eats the word of God and puffs up: I am the "true" Christian and I proclaim: Sirene kai Asphaleia. Dear citizen, do not be disturbed in your business and in your comfort! Doing business is peace and whoring is love. Amen. And then the world wonders why the judgment of God passes over the earth in wars, revolutions and collapses of great empires! But this late world no longer understands God, the cross has become a serpent. Shouldn't it make us suspicious that the pacifist preaching comes precisely from America, the land where business and prosperity are worshipped?

Thirdly. It is a mistake to attach to the phrase "peace of God" the meaning of an earthly condition. Never is morality any earthly "state", and a fortiori the Kingdom of Heaven is not any earthly state whatsoever, neither an economic system nor a political system. If one "state" were more moral or even more "religiously valuable" than the other, Jesus in his time would necessarily have had to zeal against the "system" of slavery, against the tax squeeze of the Praetors etc.. But in what should the moral advantage of the

earthly state of peace consist compared to the earthly state of war? Who wants to weigh the sum of moral heroism in peace against that in war? Man must die in war, he must die in peace. In war the warrior sacrifices his life, compulsorily or voluntarily, for the free existence of his community. In peace, the fighter of the §218 sacrifices the existence of the becoming life to the "social needs" of the fully-grown individual life. Whether death by shell splinters and poison gas pleases God less than death in the womb under the knife of the honored physician, we cannot decide. After all, the reaction of our nerves to one kind of death or another is not a moral judgment. It is part of the nature of the world and of the self-assertion of life that - in human terms - there is a "too much" of life and that the continuance of life is linked to dying. One should not confuse biology and ethics. If morality were to be derived from the earthly condition brought about by it, then the consequence would be inevitable that certain external conditions of society would also be more "moral" than others: e.g. that the peasant world is more moral than the seductive metropolitan world, because the latter is supposedly more "tempting to sin", that democracy, for instance, is more "moral" or, as one American of all people claimed, more "Christian" than monarchy, and finally - I ask you to remain serious, because if you think, you will think, you will not escape this consequence - that sleeping is more moral than waking. For he who sleeps does not sin. Now, if the consequence of this

state ethic is a morality of sleeping and - derived from it - a religion of sleeping, there must be an error in the premise. The error is that one gives to morality an earthly derivation instead of a metaphysical one: Because this or that state seems more pleasant to the just-lecturing ethicist, the attainment of the pleasant state is said to be "moral." The ethics of state must necessarily err

We summarize: There is neither a moral nor a religious reason for the Christian to condemn nationalism with its people- and time-bound decisions of conscience. Nationalism would be condemned only if it were satisfied with its morality and believed that it did not need the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for salvation. Just as little as the apostle Paul demanded of the Jew the abrogation of his nomos, so little may one demand of the German, Englishman, Russian, Chinese and whomever the abrogation of the natural morality of the people's life. The Gospel is not an abolition, but a fulfillment. And Jesus accomplished the fulfillment not in Rome as the seat of empire, but in Jerusalem as the place of the prophets

Is Socialism an Obstacle to Christianity?

That socialism can become a force against Christianity we know from the history of the social democratic and communist movements. But the reason for this lies not in socialism itself, not in the fact that it strives for a different economic system from the capitalist one, but in its connection with historical materialism and with the secularization process of the liberal age. But this connection is only historical, not essential.

Socialism excludes Christianity the moment it hypostasizes its social ideal, i.e. puts it, as it were, in the place of the Kingdom of God. Economic order always remains only economic order. One order does not have the same deficiencies as the other - they all have deficiencies. That people are tempted to exchange tried and tested deficiencies for untested ones is understandable, and the Christian has no reason to prevent people from trying out the various possibilities of life. But the moment the spirit is declared to be a product or a reappearance of matter, the moment the production and distribution of material goods is elevated to a "doctrine of salvation" which in some way

also has, as it were, magical consequences in making men "better," the conflict between socialism and Christianity, and therefore the struggle, is inevitable.

Now, what about the socialism of the National Socialist movement? This socialism consists in the following: First, it demands the domination of the state over the economy, while Marxism wants an abdication of the state to the economy. National Socialism wants to put the economy at the service of the political nation. Marxism wants to transform the state into an economic machinery, into an organization of production and distribution of goods, and to supress the nation into a historical cultural community subordinate to world culture. The National Socialists want the primacy of the state, the Marxists the primacy of the economy. (In this the Marxists find themselves together with bourgeois economic liberalism, to which, according to the idea, they should be deadly enemies).

Fourth. National Socialism fundamentally rejects materialist philosophy. Its socialism springs only from historical, social, perhaps also biological, but not from philosophical considerations. Thus, the salvation of the world is not expected from the economic system.

In this socialism, therefore, no forces are erected against Christianity. It can even be said that the sentiments directed against the "bondage of interest" coincide with the

sentiments against the taking of interest cultivated by the church fathers and later by Luther. The latter see in interest the intention of man to "secure" himself from God's punishing hand. Luther opposes ("On Married Life," 1522, p. 302) the endeavor of life insurance in general: "They trust God as long as they know they have no need of him and have supply." Life insurance by interest is to him a kind of robbery of God, a lack of trust in God. Which, in turn, did not prevent him from advocating social measures, a kind of communal socialism in certain hardships.

Thus, Christianity does not have to deal with a philosophical doctrine in the case of National Socialism as it does in the case of liberal socialism, but it can freely allow for the discussion about the economy.

The Dignity of The Nation and The Dignity of The Church

The emotional and intellectual resistance to Christianity in National Socialism is not fundamental, but subjective and individual. A fundamental resistance is offered only where the national bond is absolutized and elevated above the religious bond, where the nation is set as the highest value of all.

Then Christianity must decide whether it wants to be only "a religion" among others in the "development of mankind", which "continues to form itself", i.e. only a historical phenomenon, or whether it claims to be the eternal truth par excellence. If it is the eternal truth, then it can only be a revelation of God, manifested in Jesus Christ. Then it is impossible to postulate further "revelations" in the course of history. Because every later revelation would have to prove that the preceding revelation was insufficient. But the thought that God's incarnation and human death were not

sufficient to justify the fallen creation would be blasphemous. The claim that religion offers a higher value than the nation itself, is a claim that can only be made from a dogmatic position. Historicizing and culturalizing Christianity means dragging Christianity down into the clash of cultural values

The dogmatic position, of course, then gives the church a metaphysical dignity vis-à-vis the state and the nation. From this position one would have to say against an exclusiveness of the national value: First. To elevate the state to an absolute value would mean to elevate it above all creation. The state would then have to be more than history, since historical values, which do not consist in a revelation but in effectiveness, can only be relative. There is nothing against an idealization of the national, but everything against a religious hypostasis of the nation. The idealization of the nation is a process necessary for the increase of the national life. But to demand for the nation a religious worship, that would be a hubris for the Christian.

Secondly. The nation dies just as property dies and clans die. The "glory" of the nation, to be sure, remains eternal, but this "eternity" is not of the kind of temporal infinity, it is not in the mouths of men, but it is with God, who alone is truly eternal. All the kingdoms of the world are temporal, only the kingdom of God lasts from eternity to eternity. If we love our nation, we do not love its temporal duration, but its glory, its "Dora", and this glory consists in the fact that it accomplishes its historical task, that it represents, to speak with authority, its "idea". But this is

not what we are talking about here. It is an incontrovertible truth that the nation, as a creation of God, cannot be above God as the Creator of all things.

The king as the highest representation of a nation has his dignity, again the prophet and the preacher of the gospel as the proclaimer of God's word to the world has his dignity. The dignity of the king is worldly, but that of the preacher of God is eternal. The former has the majesty of earthly power, the latter, that of the called one of the Megalosyne en Hypselois (the majesty in heaven). (Heb. 1,3) This is how the church stands in relation to the state. Not with earthly power, but shimmering with the majesty of the divine, which it is called to offer. When Jesus stands before Pilate, Pilate, as the representative of the Roman emperor, is in possession of all power, including the power over the death and life of Jesus. Jesus has no earthly power. He, who could do all miracles, who could bring the dead to life, who could still the sea storm, was not able to kill Pilate by a miracle. For he could only do miracles with the will of God the Father. But here the will of God and therefore also of the Son was that the Son of God should be subject to Pilate, that he should be condemned by him and that he should not descend from the cross, but die and rise again. But this rabbi from Nazareth, so powerless in the face of the representative of Caesar Augustus, had power and has power to open and close eternity. So he stands before Pilate - invisible for human eyes -

shimmered by the "glory of God", which shimmer is only wondered upon and believed by the called ones.

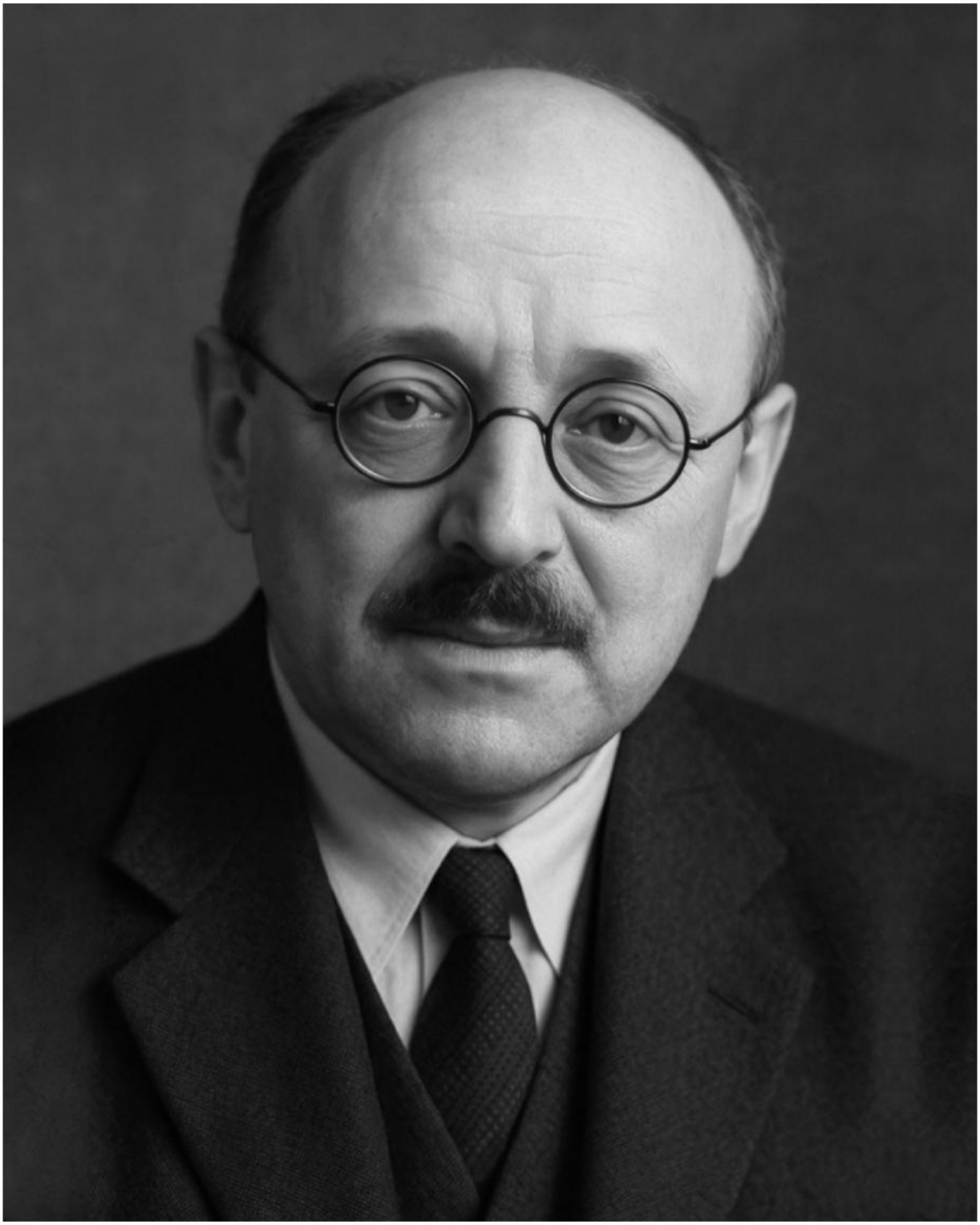
As Nathan stands before David, as Jesus stands before Pilate, so the ecclesia of God stands before the res publica of the nation. It has no legion to compel the state and the people according to its will; it has nothing but the proclamation of the gospel and the presentation of the grace of God. But in this very thing it has a power that no state and no nation has. The power of the State is that it has the power to dispose of the life and death of men. The power of the Church is faith in the eternal God and the offering of the Kingdom of Heaven. If there is to be a kingdom of heaven, there must also be hell. Therefore, the church has power only where people suspect and fear the infernal powers. For a nation that no longer trembles before hell, the church is powerless. Such a nation kills the messengers of God, it kills God's own Son until the Lord Himself comes and passes judgment on the arrogant. That the humane Christianity of the Enlightenment, which "finally" lets "all people" "go to heaven", because the eternal chastisement would be very unloving, that democratic Christianity, which is frightened by the election of the believers, as if a "privilege" had been established with it, cancels itself. For if everything finally goes to heaven indiscriminately, if not only a few but all are chosen to the kingdom of God, if hell is not a metaphysical reality but only a horror idea of dark brains, then what is the use of the birth of a Savior and the redemption through death on the cross and faith in it? Then faith and

non-belief would become one in the same! The state has then no task to regard the church as something else than a cultural association for the embellishment of family celebrations and funerals for such minds, which set so much value on a particular mood that the fees for it are inclined to spend. But the true church of Christ is based on the metaphysical fact of heaven and hell, of the election and of the redemption of the elect. Only such a Christianity, and therefore only such a church, behind which the eternity of damnation and the eternal bliss are shudderingly and blissfully imagined, may claim a higher dignity than that of the nation.

But the nation needs this Christianity and this church. For, if the nation were the last and highest, it could bear the injustice of the world only in hatred and revenge, not in faith. It would become overconfident in happiness and poisoned in misfortune. Its victory would be nothing but exploitation, and its defeat nothing but being exploited. But when the nation has God before its eyes, its anger becomes pleasing to God and its sword just, for it wields that sword with fear and trembling before the Almighty God, who has put this sword in its hand!

Wilhelm Stapel

1882 - 1954



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